

**P-05-885 Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport for Citizens with Learning Disabilities in Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Chair, 04.07.19**



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Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you most sincerely for presenting our petition to Ken Skates AM, Minister for Transport. In this letter I would like to outline my response to Ken's letter, for the discussion on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July.

I think firstly, I would like to address the issue regarding the fact that Welsh Government and Local Authorities can't expect a bus operator to run a service or in consultations with passengers. We appreciate that no bus operator can operate any service without subsidy and would not expect them to do so, however we would hope that local authorities ensure that they work with operators to ensure the services are provided and funded in order that they are both accessible for people with learning disabilities. This can't happen without people with learning disabilities being involved in the process.

It is positive that Disability Wales have been involved in the consultations, but they do not represent people with learning disabilities in Wales. The people they represent have very different accessibility needs to people with learning disabilities, whose impairment means they would be excluded to drive by the DVLA due to intellectual impairment, and therefore depend heavily on public transport to live their lives. It is important that a more informative joined up approach with Bus/ Transport providers and local authorities in the planning of services and consultations, which are essential. They need to be timely, accessible and give enough time for all to be involved (especially those who are vulnerable).

Our members, especially in the North, Powys and Rural areas of Wales are reporting that cuts to services are having an impact on their ability to access services, employment and community activities. If this is allowed to happen then this will already have a negative impact on the aspirations of the SSWB Wales Act in empowering people with learning disabilities to meet their own well being outcomes and having access to the services they need to be at the centre of designing their own services. This will also have a negative

consequence on the Improving Lives Strategy, which is aiming to reduce a deficit in services needed for people with learning disabilities to be empowered under the SSWB (Wales) Act. We may create services that people with learning disabilities need but aren't able to access.

I welcome the fact that the Concessionary Pass is already available to people in some parts of Rural Wales for rail services and thank the Minister for that. I will of course ensure that our members are all informed of this.

I also welcome the Ministers comments about the importance of transport as being important for social connections and that affordable and better transport will be part of the consideration in the Isolation and Loneliness strategy. All Wales People First, responded to this strategy and we would urge further engagement with people with learning disabilities in the design on this work. I am sure that the All Wales People First National Council (a member led forum made up of 22 representatives of people with learning disabilities across all local authority areas in Wales (who manage the organisation) would be only too happy to work with colleagues to give their feedback on or any other related issue.

All Wales People First is also happy to offer a free stall on day two of our National Festival 'AdFest 2019' which aims to provide a wide opportunity for people with learning disabilities to consult with the third, private, public sectors as well as local authorities and Welsh Government to assist them in the design and evaluation of their services in line with guidance, recommendations and duties under the SSWB Wales Act, goals of the Future Generations Act, Healthier Wales Strategy, Prosperity for all and the Improving Lives programme. Our members would love to work with Welsh Government on anything that affects their life and their ability to access the community.

My over arching concern over this issue is the fact that whilst legislation is being designed to address issues and referenced as evidence of action taking place, the fact that many of the issues raised still ultimately are referred back as being the responsibility of local authorities, who may in turn claim they don't have the resources to implement these measures, much of the legislation may not be helpful in practice and therefore the circumstances will not change for people with learning disabilities. I would urge the Welsh Government to help us find a way that would enable a practical and meaningful resolution to resolve this issue.

I thank you most sincerely for your time on this matter.

Yours sincerely  
Joe Powell  
**(Chief Executive)**